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I, JANENE PEISKER, TEAM LEADER EXAMINATION SUPPORT AND SALES hereby certify that annexed is a true copy of the Provisional specification in connection with Application No. 2004901061 for a patent by STARGAMES CORPORATION PTY LIMITED as filed on 03 March 2004.

WITNESS my hand this
Fifteenth day of March 2005

JANENE PEISKER
TEAM LEADER EXAMINATION
SUPPORT AND SALES

AUSTRALIA

Patents Act 1990

PROVISIONAL SPECIFICATION

Invention Title: **Linear Scatter Jackpot Method and System**

The invention is described in the following statement:

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Linear Scatter jackpot Method and System

Technical Field

This invention relates to the provision of linear progressive jackpots triggered by scattered symbols on a gaming machine.

5 **Background Art**

On many gaming machine systems, progressive jackpots are provided. Such a jackpot may be awarded to a player when the player achieves a particular combination of symbols or the like on the machine, or at a random time. The present invention is concerned with the former type. Whilst such jackpots may be 10 implemented on single machines, the common implementation of such a game uses a jackpot pooled across many machines, so that the jackpot is relatively large and is won at reasonable intervals.

The jackpot value in such linked games is generally incremented by a designated portion of each player's wager being added to the pool.

15 Current gaming regulations in many parts of the world require players to be paid returns in proportion to their bet level. For example, if a player plays a single line gaming machine at 1 credit, and achieves 3 'X' symbols on a line and a prize of 5 credits is awarded, then it would be expected that a player achieving the same result and playing 2 credits on the same single line game would be 20 awarded 10 credits. This is referred to as linearity and ensures all players are paid prizes that are proportionate to their bet level.

In the instance of progressive jackpots, all players are contributing to a common prize pool that can be won by any player at any time. A popular format to win a jackpot prize is called a symbol driven link progressive. This format 25 requires that a player must achieve a certain combination on the gaming screen to be awarded a prize or jackpot, or is given the chance to win a jackpot through a bonus game or similar if they achieve this combination.

In order to meet regulations, any jackpot game must provide a linear chance of winning these jackpots. It is also a challenge to manufacturers to 30 implement the game in such a way that game play is entertaining, as well as the jackpot appearing achievable to the player.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a new, symbol driven jackpot system which is appealing to players and facilitates linear returns.

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Summary of the invention

In a broad form, the present invention provides a method of providing a jackpot, in which the jackpot is triggered by symbols scattered across the screen

5   and not confined to a payline.

According to one aspect, the present invention provides a method of providing a jackpot in a gaming machine, said machine having multiple simulated reels, and at least one payline, comprising at least the steps of:

(a)   determining a player's wager;

10 (b)   playing the game, so that the simulated reels assume a specific configuration;

(c)   determining if scatter symbols appear across said reels in a predefined manner, and if so then paying said jackpot.

The jackpot may be paid by paying in full a jackpot, either on a specific

15 machine or across linked machines; paying part of a jackpot; or allowing the player to play a game which determines if and/or the quantum of any jackpot. The specification and claims should be read using this definition unless the context requires otherwise.

In a preferred form, the scatter at least in part is reliant upon symbols with

20 an active and an inactive state. In the active state, these symbols act as part of the scatter to award the jackpot. The linearity is provided by making the probability that the symbol is active proportional to the size of the wager. In one form, this may be performed by having a different symbol, which only changes state after the reel is stationary.

25 As the probability that each symbol is active on the selected reel is independent of how many scatter symbols are present, this provides a simple, scalable way of ensuring linearity.

Whilst the present invention may be implemented on a single machine, it is preferably implemented as a linked jackpot arrangement.

30 As games and game types have evolved, different pay methods have been introduced to make games more exciting. One of the most popular is the scatter pay that does not require paylines to reward a player. In a scatter game, the appearance of the scatter symbols anywhere on the screen or in a pre-

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determined directional pattern (left to right, right to left, adjacent) pays a prize multiplied by the players total bet. The scatter feature is generally an addition to payline based games. The present invention awards a jackpot, or the chance to win a jackpot, based on a scatter combination. This is a popular game feature,

5   which has not previously been used to award a jackpot.

One of the keys to devising linearity formats is to ensure players understand how they are potentially being rewarded. As scatters are now an accepted form of paying combination, this invention takes the simple scatter pay and adds another dimension that retains the existing method of awarding prizes,

10   but introduces another element that is over and above the standard slot game.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The present invention would be described with reference to the accompanying figures, in which:

Fig. 1 is a illustration of relevant reel symbols for a implementation of the

15   present invention.

Detailed Description

It will be understood that there are a variety of ways to implement the present invention.   However, the invention will be principally described with reference to a specific illustrative implementation.

20   In one embodiment, the scatter symbol in question resides on reels 1,2 and 3 of a 5 reel game. The scatter symbol has an 'active' and 'inactive' position. While there are other potential embodiments based on this, in this example the scatter symbols are always 'active' on reels 1 and 2 for maximum exposure to the player. The scatter symbols on reel 3 are replaced by another symbol that, upon

25   appearing on the completed position of the reels, reveals the scatter in an 'active' or 'inactive' position. The chance of revealing an 'active' symbol is the players wager divided by the maximum wager available.

The game may be configured in such a way that the base game prize for 3 x 'active' symbols is the same as 2 x 'active' and an 'inactive' symbol. The

30   difference between the 2 is the player who gets the 3 'active' symbols wins a jackpot, or provides them entry into a feature that will or may award a jackpot.

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This approach to implementing the invention allows the game to be designed with some mathematically unique and innovative devices that will streamline the game development process and make games more flexible.

5 Firstly, the number of symbols that appear on reel 3 that is chosen to reveal the 'active' or 'inactive' position is not related to the number of possibilities there are. If the maximum bet on a particular game is 500 credits, and the player bets 100, then when the symbol lands on reel 3, it has a 20% chance (100/500) of being 'active' when revealed. If that same game was changed to modify the maximum bet, the reel strips have no need to be modified as the designer may

10 select between 1 and n symbols to appear on the reel depending on aesthetics, game presentation or other variables.

A second game design feature is that this can be developed in a range of formats on a standard slot reel game. While most games are designed in a standard 5x3 matrix, this implementation of the present invention can be readily

15 implemented in any other format.

Figure 1.1 is a representation of what the player would see in the instance that the game is being played. In this embodiment where the scatters appear on reels 1,2 and 3, we have the situation in (a) where 'active' scatters appear on reels 1&2, and the symbol that will reveal 'active' or 'inactive' (designated by '?')

20 appears on reel 3. While there are many implementations of how this may be presented to the player, our preferred embodiment is that the '?' symbol will animate to reveal the 'active' scatter symbol or the 'inactive' scatter symbol.

The invention could similarly be implemented with, for example, an arrangement in which the symbol remains the same unless it becomes active, or

25 in which the symbols appearing during the simulated reel spinning have already become active or inactive.

It will be understood that this implementation is merely illustrative. For example, the there could be more or less reels with scatter symbols. The reels selected for the example are purely illustrative. The present invention can be

30 readily added to existing games with modifications as required.

It will be appreciated that the present invention is of broad application, and can be implemented in a variety of ways. Variations and additions are possible within the general scope of the present invention.

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CLAIMS

1.   A method of providing a jackpot in a gaming machine, said machine having multiple simulated reels, and at least one payline, comprising at least the
5 steps of:

   (a)   determining a player's wager;

   (b)   playing the game, so that the simulated reels assume a specific configuration;

   (c)   determining if scatter symbols appear across said reels in a
10 predefined manner, and if so then paying said jackpot.

2.   A method according to claim 1, wherein in step (b) one or more scatter symbols on at least one reel have a probability of appearing in an active scatter state, said probability being dependant upon the size of the player's wager.

15   3.   A method according to claim 2, wherein the probability of winning a jackpot based upon the scatter symbols is linearly dependant upon the size of the player's wager relative to the maximum possible wager.

4.   A method according to claim 3, wherein on at least one reel a first set of symbols may optionally appear in the specific configuration, each of said
20 set of symbols changing in said specific configuration to either an active scatter symbol, which may form part of the scatter symbols for determining if a jackpot should be paid, or an inactive symbol.

5.   A method according to claim 4, wherein the inactive symbol is operative for non-jackpot game play.

25   6.   A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the scatter symbols on some reels are always active, and on one or more reels some or all of the scatter symbols are only selectively active dependant upon the size of the player's wager relative to the maximum possible wager.

7.   A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the
30 jackpot is accumulated across a plurality of linked machines.

8.   A method according to any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the jackpot is accumulated on a single machine.

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9.   A system for operating a linked jackpot, comprising at least a plurality of gaming machines linked to a central jackpot controller, said central jackpot controller and said machines cooperating to implement the method according to any one of claim 1 to 7.

5   10.   A method of awarding a jackpot in a simulated reels gaming machine, wherein one or more reels include active scatter symbols, and one reel includes a set of symbols which selectively form active or inactive scatter symbols, the jackpot being won by a predetermined combination of active scatter symbols in a game outcome display including one on the said reel, wherein the
10   probability that a scatter symbol is active on the game outcome display has a probability dependant upon the size of the player's wager, and the maximum possible wager for the machine.

DATED this 3rd day of March 2004

STARGAMES CORPORATION PTY LTD

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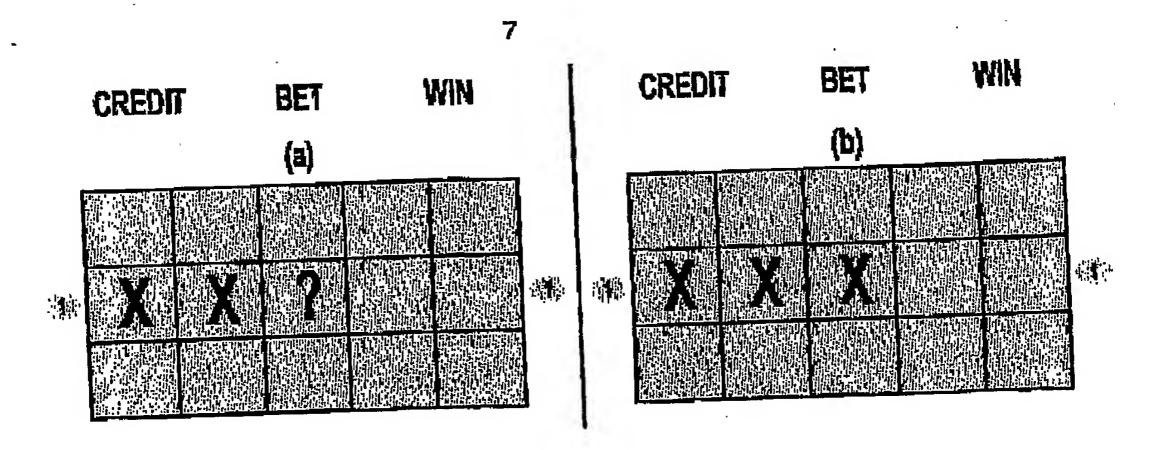AUSTRALIA

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Figure 1

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